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WEEKLY REPORT



THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

10 November 1965

**INTELLIGENCE AND REPORTING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE INTERAGENCY
VIETNAM COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

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THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

(4 November - 10 November 1965)

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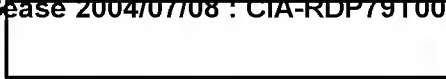
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Note: South Vietnam Battle Statistics (Monthly) and US Combat Casualty Figures in Vietnam (Monthly) for the month of October 1965 will appear in the next issue of The Weekly Report on the Situation in South Vietnam.

(The Weekly Report on the Situation in South Vietnam is based on contributions from CIA, DIA, and INR; it is edited and published by CIA without final coordination.)

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THE WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE

A continued high level of Viet Cong activity, including two attacks in battalion strength, was overshadowed last week by two highly successful US military operations in the highlands and in Zone D north of Saigon.

The political scene in Saigon remains quiet with Premier Ky again on a foreign trip, but there are some signs of growing disenchantment on the part of South Vietnam's Catholic leadership as well as of leftist intellectuals in the north of the country.

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I. THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. POLITICAL SITUATION

1. Saigon remains politically calm, with Premier Ky again out of the country this week on an official visit to South Korea from 8-12 November. Before his departure, Ky and other government officials continued their efforts to foster a sense of unity and understanding among various Vietnamese social groups. On 2 November, Ky and Chief of State General Thieu hosted a dinner for representatives of the country's military veterans, promising them government assistance. On 4 November, Ky and other aides spent most of a day in consultations with representatives of the country's major trade union, the CVT, including union president Tran Quoc Buu. Accounts of the meeting from CVT officials, who previously complained of government harassment, indicate satisfaction with Ky's willingness to understand their point of view. On 6 November, in a radio "fireside chat," Ky addressed himself to letters received from individual citizens concerning such matters as rice, housing, schools, taxes, and high prices.

2. Despite these small positive steps by the government, there were indications during the week of growing dissatisfaction on the part of important special interest groups. A communique issued by the liaison office of the Catholic archdiocese in Saigon urged the government, in its all-important pursuit of the war effort against the Viet Cong, not to ignore non-military problems. These were specifically identified as the public desire for democratic institutions, potential "misunderstandings" concerning national sovereignty in its relations with friendly states, the dangers of inflation, and of internal political divisions. The communique, although signed by Vietnamese priests representing both the northern and southern Catholic elements, is not characterized as an official Vietnamese Catholic church position. The US Embassy, however, is inclined to regard it as indicative of growing Catholic disenchantment with the Ky government.

3. The embassy has also reported new signs of contentiousness among certain elements in the northern city of Hué, particularly the university intellectuals who are essentially Buddhist and leftist-oriented.

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This small, but vocal group is becoming increasingly petulant in its criticism of US policies and actions, including the behavior of American troops. Apart from these militants in I Corps, however, the embassy comments that relations between Americans and Vietnamese have improved in II and III Corps as a result of deliberate American efforts. Improvement may also result from a subtle reprimand, reportedly issued by the Vietnamese military Directorate in late October, to II Corps commander General Vinh Loc concerning his attitude toward Americans in his area.

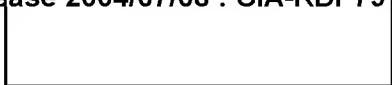
5. The military in Saigon are also apparently wrestling with problems posed by various active or retired generals now in political exile abroad. In addition to new rumors about the desire of former military leader General "Big" Minh to return from exile in Bangkok, the outgoing ambassador to the US General Khiem--due for transfer to Taiwan--is reportedly pressing to return to Saigon in the hopes of regaining his former position as chief of the Joint General Staff.

Ky and Thieu have agreed to the return of another exile, General Do Cao Tri, for the purpose of defending himself against charges of corruption and misconduct raised by General Thi, Tri's successor in I Corps. The return of either Khiem or Tri, both of whom are associated--in Buddhist eyes--with active support of the Catholics, could raise new problems for the military regime.

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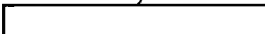
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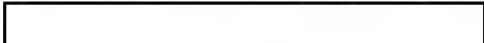


6. The Buddhist leadership, for the present, remains politically quiet. A group of top Buddhist monks, led by Buddhist Institute chairman Thich Tam Chau, departed on 4 November for a 24-day tour of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The group may have received government funds for its trip. Any such government assistance could prove a further irritant to Catholics, although Ky has been relatively successful to date in avoiding any charges of favoritism to rival political or religious factions.

Economic Situation

7. There has been increasing formal US/GVN cooperation on various problems in the Vietnamese economy. A permanent high level joint committee has been established and will meet at least biweekly to discuss and develop policy related to overall GVN economic policy, the US aid program and specific problems developing from the massive presence of US troops. The committee is composed of the ministers of Economy and Finance, the governor of the National Bank, the chief of cabinet of the Economy and Finance Ministry, a special assistant to the prime minister, the director and deputy directors of USOM, and the economic counselor of embassy. Temporary subcommittees have been set up to study a wide variety of problems, including the MPC script system, PX commodities on the black market, salaries, housing, and ports.

8. In connection with the port problem, the minister of Public Works has, at the request of the commissioner general for Finance and Economy, established a joint Saigon Port Committee composed of the port director (chairman) and representatives from the ministries of Defense, Economy and Finance, MACV, and USOM. The committee's basic function is to regulate cargo in and out of the Saigon port, to plan for the loading and unloading of vessels, and to establish cargo-handling priorities. 



9. The Ministry of Rural Construction has accepted USOM proposals for programming and budgeting of funds for rural pacification purposes. While a number of issues are still unresolved, the new procedure, which allows considerable latitude to the provinces, is designed to facilitate the release of funds from Saigon. It remains to be seen whether this reform will resolve a longstanding problem impeding an effective pacification program in the countryside.

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10. The commodity price trend was generally downward for both local and imported goods over the last week, with rice prices continuing to decline to levels at or slightly above the price prevailing a year ago. Substantial rises for cement and wheat flour proved exceptions in the overall picture. Quantities of these two items have been retained in warehouses pending reimbursement of import duties paid before rescission of the September tariff increases.

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B. MILITARY SITUATION

1. The fifth consecutive week, the Viet Cong initiated over 700 incidents. Total incidents for the week ending 6 November were 731 compared to 782 the previous week; attacks also declined from 14 to six.

2. The week ending 6 November was the costliest of the war for US forces with 70 killed in action and 237 wounded, mostly in the second phase of the battle near Plei Me in Pleiku Province. All of the heavy losses suffered by the Viet Cong in this action, and a subsequent US/Australian operation in Bien Hoa Province, are not incorporated in last week's Viet Cong casualties, but estimates run as high as 1000 for the two battles.

3. Terrorism accounted for 65 percent of the Viet Cong activity followed by AA fire, sabotage, propaganda, and attacks in that order. Of all incidents, 29 percent occurred in I Corps, 26 percent in IV Corps, 24 percent in III Corps, and 21 percent in the II Corps.

GVN/Allied Activities

4. A significant operation occurred on 8 November northeast of Bien Hoa during a search-and-destroy operation conducted by elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade and a battalion of the Royal Australian regiment. Contact was established with the Viet Cong when the US battalion was ambushed by at least one battalion of Viet Cong and the Australians clashed with an estimated 100 Viet Cong. The action involving the Australians lasted approximately two hours; however, the forces opposing the US were dug in and fought stubbornly to retain their fortified positions. Massed artillery, mortar fire, and 34 air sorties were required before the Viet Cong weakened, some 11 hours after initial contact had been made. Friendly casualties sustained during this operation were 50 killed (two Australians) and 157 wounded (six Australians). A body count revealed that 403 Viet Cong had been killed. US forces estimated that an additional 200 Viet Cong were killed during the battle.

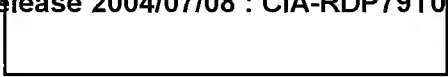
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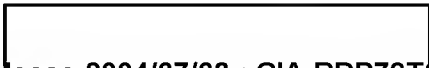
5. Another action involving US forces was the 1st Air Cavalry Division's (US) brigade-size search-and-destroy operation from Plei Me west to the Cambodian border. The US force, taking advantage of its air mobility and aerial surveillance capability, conducted numerous small search-and-destroy operations within the 90-square-kilometer operational area. Results of the operation were 169 Viet Cong confirmed as killed, an additional 253 estimated killed, 56 captured, and 21 suspects detained. US losses were 47 killed and 147 wounded; 26 deaths and 50 wounded occurred when two US companies clashed with an estimated Viet Cong battalion on 6 November.

6. The recent Viet Cong seige of Plei Me and their stubborn resistance during the 8 November Bien Hoa battle indicates their willingness to sustain large losses in an effort to achieve tactical advantage. The Viet Cong may reason that, despite the substantial losses, their only way of slowing down the allied momentum resulting from the introduction of US combat units is to inflict heavy casualties. The Viet Cong possibly are in need of a major psychological victory, and when faced with an opportunity in which they think this might be obtained, are willing to risk heavy casualties.

7. The number of battalion or larger size operations decreased from 111 to 86 during the week ending 6 November. Contacts also dropped from 65 to 30. Small unit actions increased from 20,425 to 21,680 with contacts increasing from 288 to 300. The Viet Cong lost 536 killed and 197 captured compared to 1,264 and 133 the previous week. South Vietnamese casualties dropped from 363 killed, 773 wounded, and 63 missing last week to 144, 288, and 78 this week. Military Chieu Hoi returnees remained about the same with 205 this week compared to 229 the previous period.

8. Three US B-52 raids were flown against suspected Viet Cong installations in Vinh Binh, Long Khanh, and Bien Hoa provinces, with unreported results. This brings the total of such strikes to 63 as of 10 November.

9. Inspection of 5,313 junks and 19,695 persons, a slight decline from the previous week, by



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US Naval Forces failed to disclose any infiltration attempts.

Viet Cong Initiated Activities

10. There were only six Communist attacks in the week ending 6 November, of which one is considered significant. On 4 November in Kien Hoa Province, an estimated Viet Cong battalion during the hours of darkness attacked a bivouac of the 41st Ranger Battalion (ARVN) and fired on two nearby posts. The attack resulted in friendly casualties of 16 killed, 28 wounded, and nine missing; Viet Cong losses are unknown. This attack was the largest in IV Corps in a month and took place in the Viet Cong transportation/liaison corridor which begins in Kien Hoa Province and ends in Tay Ninh Province.

11. Activity in I Corps consisted principally of harassing fire, sabotage, and terrorism. Fifty percent of all incidents occurred in Quang Nam Province, probably reflecting an attempt to counter the stabilizing effect on the province of the large US Marine contingent located there.

12. With the exception of an attack on a defended village in Pleiku Province, Viet Cong-initiated activity in II Corps was relatively light and consisted mostly of harassment and sabotage. PAVN and Viet Cong Main Force regiments in II Corps now stand at seven confirmed, one probable, and one possible. No significant movement of these units was detected during the week. In light of the forces available in II Corps, the stepdown of Viet Cong activity may indicate that the forces are appraising the results of the Plei Me battle prior to initiating new action.

13. The Viet Cong pattern of harassment, sabotage, minings, terrorism, and stopping of civilian traffic and extortion of money from the travelers continued in III Corps.

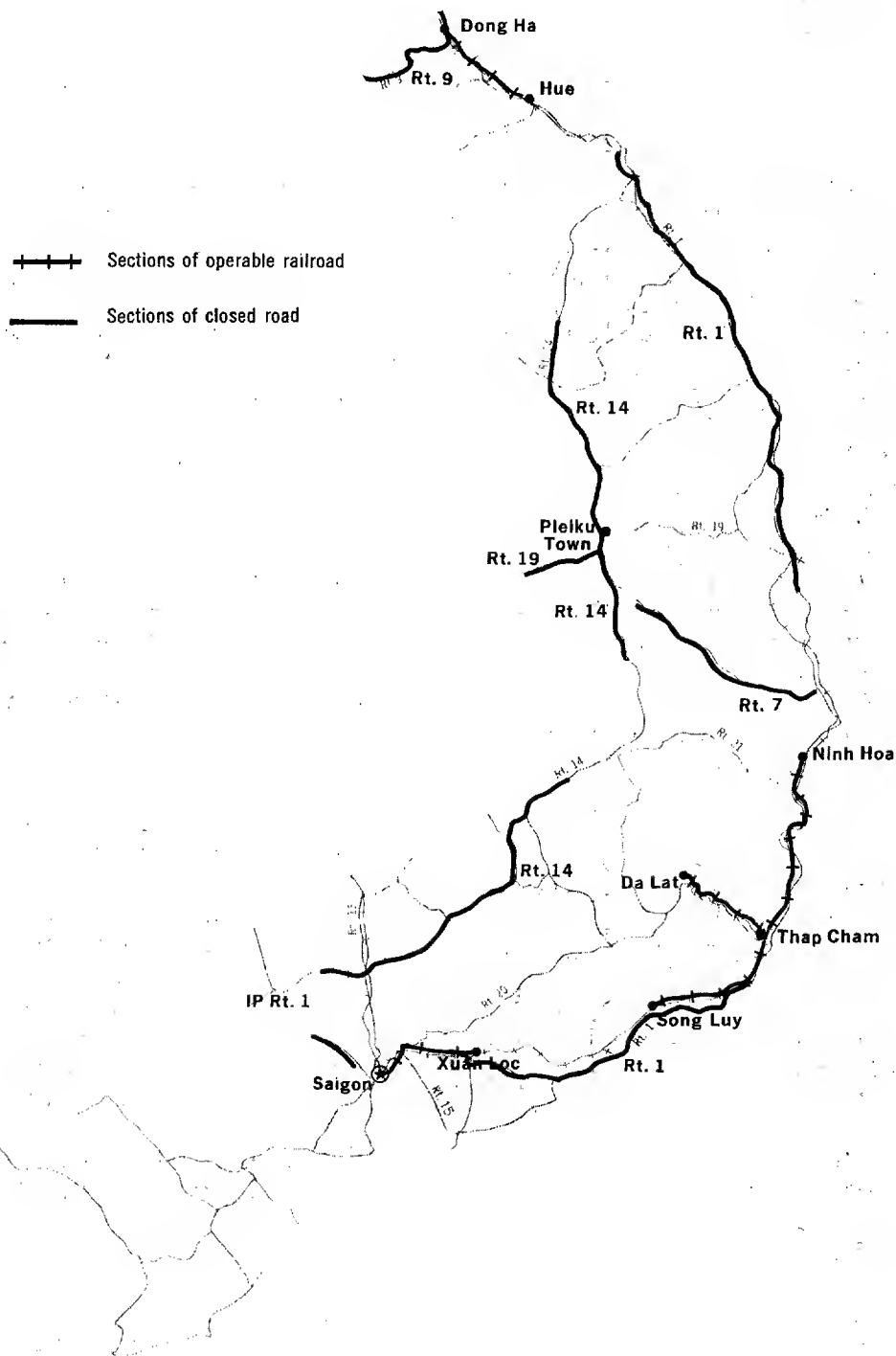
14. Acts of terrorism and sabotage were the primary Viet Cong activity in IV Corps. The attack on the ARVN Ranger Battalion bivouac in Kien Hoa Province coupled with the high incident rate in this area

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CURRENT STATUS OF MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND THE COASTAL RAILROAD



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over the past two months tends to substantiate the importance the Viet Cong place on the Kien Hoa/Tay Ninh transportation/liaison corridor. The attack and high incident rate also indicates that the Viet Cong will react to enemy presence in an area vital to their cause. The recent loss of munitions and arms manufacturing equipment in Kien Tuong Province should create a significant logistical replacement problem for the Communists. This may cause increased activity in the entire northern portion of the IV Corps area as the Viet Cong attempt to secure the area so that munitions can be brought in unhindered.

15. National Route 1 is closed in Quang Tin, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Binh Thuan, Binh Tuy, and Long Khanh Provinces. Route 9 is closed in Quang Tri Province. Route 14 is closed in Kontum, Pleiku, Quang Duc, Phuoc Long, and Binh Long provinces. Route 19 is closed west of Pleiku City, Pleiku Province. Route 7 is closed in Phu Bon and Phu Yen Provinces. Interprovincial Route 1 is closed in Hau Nghia Province. The National Railroad is closed between Xuan Loc, Long Khanh Province and Song Luy, Binh Thuan Province; between Ninh Hoa, Khanh Hoa Province and Hue, Thua Thien Province.

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~~SECRET~~C. RURAL CONSTRUCTION

1. A recent report from the US Embassy Provincial Reporting Unit indicates that the security situation has generally improved during the past few months in the coastal lowland areas of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces. These two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam comprise the 1st Division (ARVN) area of operations of the I Corps Tactical zone. This division, and paramilitary units in its area of responsibility, are rated rather high by American observers. While statistical information concerning the number of completed hamlets does not generally support the contention that the security situation has improved, the embassy report states that in many areas of both provinces a large number of hamlets can be added rapidly to the completed list once administrative cadre are available..

2. In Quang Tri Province, only 62 hamlets are currently carried as secured. Rural construction cadres are at work in only one district of the province, Hai Lang, site of the province capital. However, in two districts to the north of the capital, where only a few hamlets are carried as secured, sub-sector advisors feel safe enough to travel the roads in their areas, during daylight hours, without armed escorts.

3. In Thua Thien Province, there are 91 secured hamlets, 36 short of the number programmed for the end of August. The rural construction plan has subsequently been altered with only 30 more hamlets scheduled to be completed by the end of this year. The main area of pacification activity is now centered around Hué.

4. Provincial reports from Lam Dong and Phu Yen provinces point up the limited extent of government control in these two provinces. In Lam Dong Province, the GVN controls only 18 hamlets of a total of 78 in the province; another 18 are under Viet Cong sway and the remainder owe allegiance to whatever side happens to have forces in the area at a particular time. By contrast in May, the government claimed to exert control over 35 of the then 82 hamlets in the province (four since that time

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have been abandoned), with a population of about 35,000 people. The Viet Cong were considered at that time to hold only eight hamlets and 3,000 people. There is some indication that the situation in Lam Dong now is improving slightly. A new and energetic province chief is one factor, another is the use of airstrikes, which have apparently been at least partly responsible for a sudden up turn in Chieu Hoi returnees in this province. Government control over the population in Phu Yen Province is currently reckoned at about 130,000 out of a total of 320,000. In terms of area control, the government controls only about ten percent of the province.

5. At a recent meeting of the joint GVN/US rural construction council meeting, General Thang, minister for Rural Construction, gave a report on his first month in office. Thang announced that Premier Ky had signed a decree on 4 November to create rural construction councils at each government echelon. The Central Rural Construction Council, will be enlarged, adding corps commanders and the chief of the National Police to its present membership of cabinet ministers concerned with rural construction activities. At the lower echelons--corps province, and district levels--the rural construction councils will be consultative bodies primarily designed to ensure local military support; the executive chain of command for rural construction will run from the Rural Construction Ministry to province and district chiefs.

6. Thang also indicated that the three pilot projects selected for intensified focus of the rural construction effort will be the Qui Nhon area of Binh Dinh Province, Quang Nam Province, and a showcase area near Saigon, in Gia Dinh Province, where a housing project will be the main undertaking. Quang Nam Province is expected to be the most difficult of the pilot areas because of the deep-rooted Viet Cong infrastructure.

7. Thang further stated that the government hopes by 1 December to start unifying, training, and equipping rural construction cadres. The main training center will be at Vung Tau in Phuoc Tuy Province; a second center may be constructed in

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Bien Hoa Province. Specialist, or technical cadres, will not be unified with the rural construction cadres, but their efforts will be mutually coordinated.

8. Chieu Hoi returnees, according to government figures totaled 368 for the week, a slight increase over the 290 reported the previous week. Military returnees numbered 205 versus the 229 of the previous week, and constituted the single largest category of returnees. Civilian returnees numbered 108, a large increase over the previous week's 20; political cadres numbered 50 this week as opposed to the 41 of the week before. Five returnees in the draft/dodger/deserter category made up the balance of the returnees.

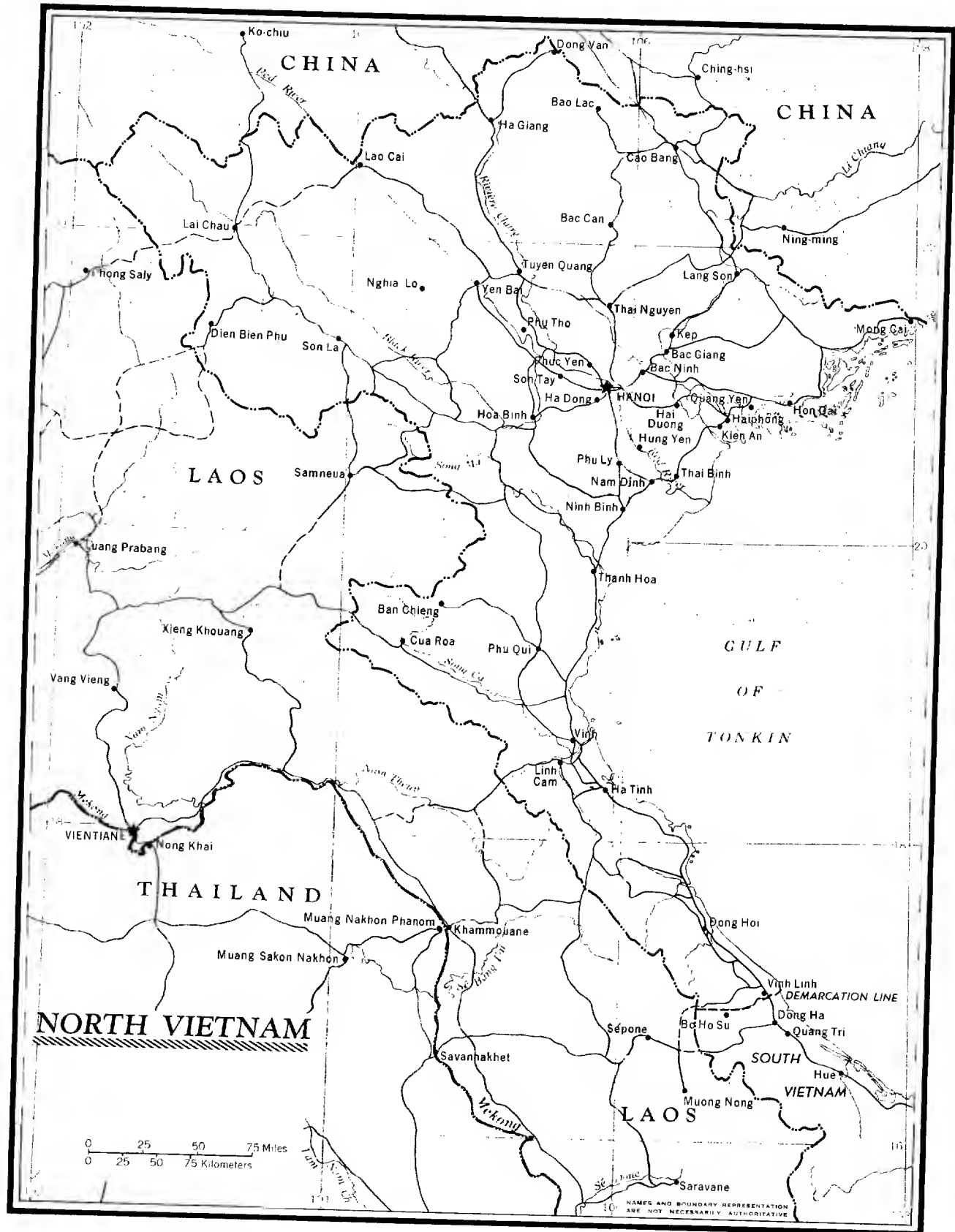
9. As of the end of October, the number of refugees increased to 719,203--an increase of 8,751 since mid-October. According to the GVN, 460,956 are in temporary shelters which means that the number of refugees resettled has remained static at about 258,200 for at least a month.

10. One of the serious problems facing the GVN in the handling of refugees, according to USOM, is the slowness of processing new refugees. In many instances newly-arrived refugees are forced to wait several days before they are issued food or money from the local refugee officials.

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II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BLOC

1. Unconfirmed press reports in late October from Hanoi and Peking, indicating that North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong and other DRV officials may have visited China and the Soviet Union in mid-October, have been strengthened [REDACTED]

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Dong had made the trip to discuss "urgent economic matters" with Chinese and Soviet officials. If such a trip was undertaken; it is likely that the Vietnamese officials also took the occasion to probe the extent to which the Soviets and Chinese can be counted upon for additional military support. It is also probable that the DRV officials pushed for a coordinated bloc political and military position on the Vietnamese conflict.

2. Also during October [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] suggested that a high-level meeting may have been held in Hanoi. A likely discussion topic would have been future DRV strategy in the war. The decisions reached would have hinged partly upon the results of any conversations held in Moscow and Peking by the DRV Premier. Moreover, until such decisions were implemented, it is likely that the DRV public position would be kept on dead center. This may have been the intention behind the issuance of a Foreign Ministry statement by the regime on 5 November that contained routine charges condemning the US buildup in South Vietnam and reiterated Hanoi's standard terms for bringing the fighting to a conclusion.

3. Peking picked up the DRV Foreign Ministry statement on 8 November and used it as the peg on which to hang a propaganda blast at the US policy on negotiations. Asserting that the war in Vietnam was a "life and death conflict" and that there could be no peace in Vietnam as long as the US "remained there," the People's Daily declared that the recent Viet Cong "victories" are "the best answer" the Vietnamese can give to US "escalation of the war of aggression and its peace talks swindle."

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III. THIRD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS

A. CAMBODIA

2. According to Radio Phnom Penh, Sihanouk complained in a four-hour Palace working session about the smuggling of rice into South Vietnam for the Viet Cong with the connivance of Cambodian military and civilian "functionaries." He noted that this smuggling was contributing to a rise in rice prices for the Cambodian people while at the same time was depriving the government itself of any financial profit. He further noted that neighbors of warring countries customarily profit from wars but thus far Cambodia has only suffered financial losses, a situation that should be changed. Chou Seng, Chief of Sihanouk's private cabinet indicated that Viet Cong representatives had told him that his group could prevent Vietnam from exporting rubber and other products and would be willing to exchange these products with Cambodia. Chou Seng replied that consideration might be given to the proposal.

3. The GVN has advised Embassy Saigon that it has received a note from the Cambodian Government protesting an alleged helicopter overflight and broadcasts over Cambodian territory on 14 October. The Foreign Office plans to reply as soon as it receives reports of the investigation of the incident from the Defense Ministry.

B. REPUBLIC OF KOREA

A GVN delegation led by Premier Ky and Minister of Defense Nguyen Huu Co arrived in Seoul on November 8 ostensibly on a goodwill visit and to thank the ROK for its assistance to Vietnam. Seoul newspapers reported

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on 9 November that in his meeting with Premier Chong il-Kuan, Ky asked for additional ROK combat troops. While we had no reliable prior information that the question of additional troops would be discussed, earlier reports from Seoul clearly indicated ROK interest in increasing its troop commitment to Vietnam. Both Foreign Minister Yi Tong-Won and National Assemblyman Kim broached the subject in conversations with US Embassy officials prior to the Ky visit. While Yi was rather vague, Kim reportedly was quite specific favoring the despatch of two additional divisions to raise the ROK commitment to a full army corps. He further believed that this corps should be assigned an exclusive territory for which it would have sole responsibility.

C. JAPAN

According to Tokyo press reports, Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky has called off his planned trip to Japan which was to have started on November 11. The Korean treaty should be coming to a vote shortly in the lower house of the Japanese Diet, and there was speculation that a visit by Ky at this time might provide the opposition to the treaty with still another issue.

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E. AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTMENTS

After some delays, the GVN officially decreed on November 1 the appointments of three new Ambassadors.

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Pham Dang Lam, a former Foreign Minister, has been appointed ambassador to Manila, General Tran Thien Khiem has been assigned to Taipei, and Vu Van Thai will replace Khiem as ambassador to Washington.

F. FREE WORLD ASSISTANCE

1. REPUBLIC OF KOREA. Talks are now being held in Saigon concerning additional ROK medical aid to South Vietnam. Preliminary thinking is that the Koreans will provide three medical teams (composition not yet determined) which will give general medical and surgical assistance to selected provinces, preferably near the ROK military forces.

2. REPUBLIC OF CHINA. The GRC is prepared to send two C-46 aircraft to South Vietnam on or about November 16, pending GVN acceptance of the following conditions: (1) the planes would be supplied under the name China Airlines; (2) the GVN will provide logistics for the crew and fuel for the aircraft; (3) the GRC will pay the wages of crews not in uniform and for aircraft maintenance; and (4) the planes will be made available for three months subject to extension at GVN request. The GVN is expected to approve these conditions following solution of a jurisdictional dispute between the GVN Ministries of Defense and Communications.

3. JAPAN. Dr. Hisao Shoga, a respected Tokyo physician, told Embassy Tokyo that he plans to go to South Vietnam in mid-November to survey the possibilities of a private Japanese medical aid program. He has already started a public fund-raising program in Japan but hopes for support from business and possibly government circles at a later stage. He plans to have Japanese doctors to go on a three-month rotation plan to areas in South Vietnam where Vietnamese doctors are not available, particularly jungle and/or refugee areas.

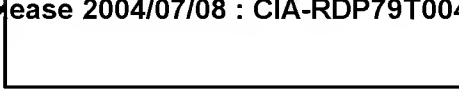
4. NEW ZEALAND. The New Zealand Government is provisionally prepared to make \$160,000 available for refugee assistance. This would be in addition to the \$28,000 contributed in May 1965.

5. CANADA. The Canadian Government expects to give favorable consideration to a proposal that it

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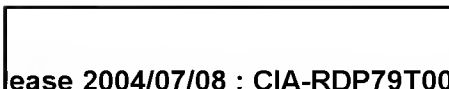
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establish a rehabilitation center in South Vietnam for children maimed by war. The proposal, which is expected momentarily from Dr. Gingras who recently returned from South Vietnam, will provide hospital facilities for treatment of 20 in-patients and 70 out-patients. The Canadians believe such a center will complement the US rehabilitation program and the orthopedic surgical work now undertaken by Canadian Dr. Hall and his staff.

6. SPAIN. Embassy Saigon believes that Spain's offer of four ambulances, each manned by an army doctor, a medical corpsman, and a driver would be more effective by foregoing the ambulances and utilizing the medical personnel as a medical team serving a provincial hospital. This would have the added advantage of providing a clearly identifiable Spanish effort to Vietnam.



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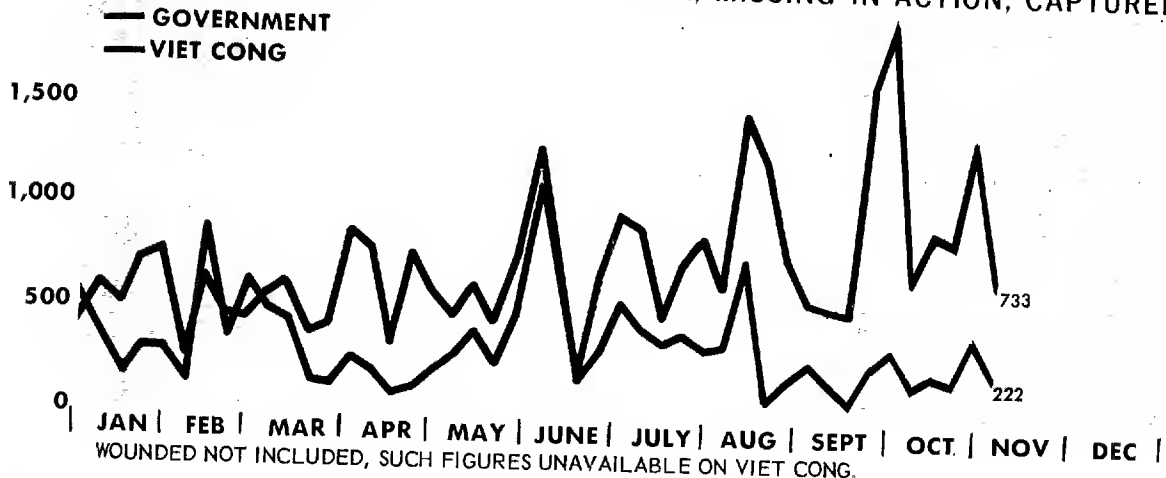
SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS, 1965

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WEEKLY REPORT

30 OCT - 5 NOV

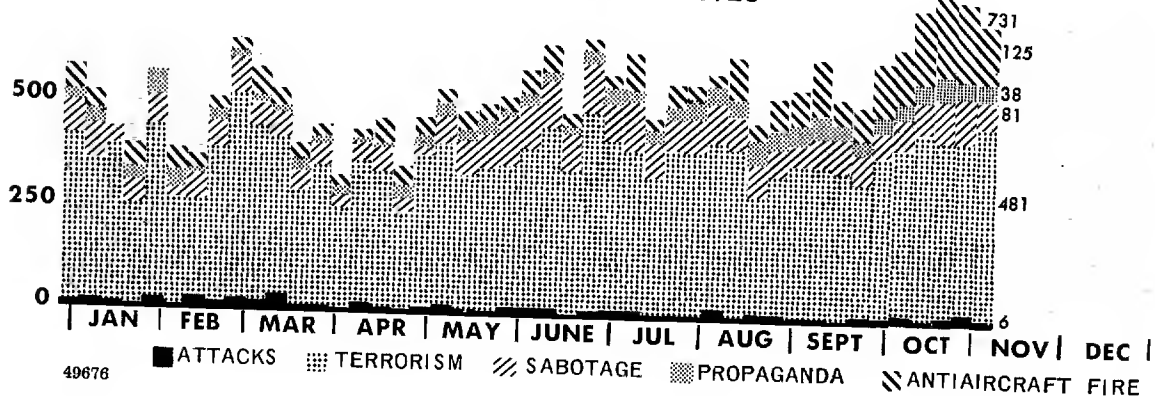
PERSONNEL LOSSES (KILLED IN ACTION, MISSING IN ACTION, CAPTURED)



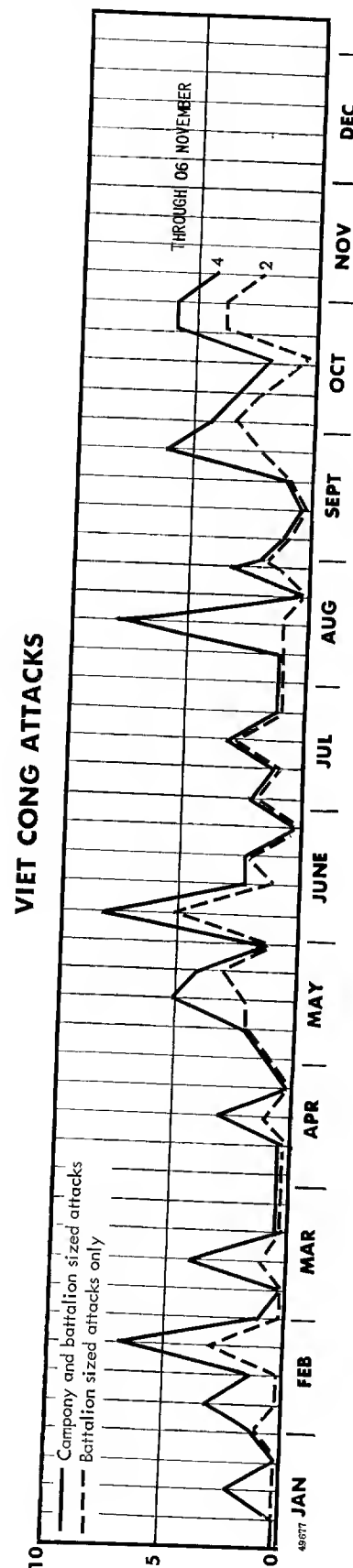
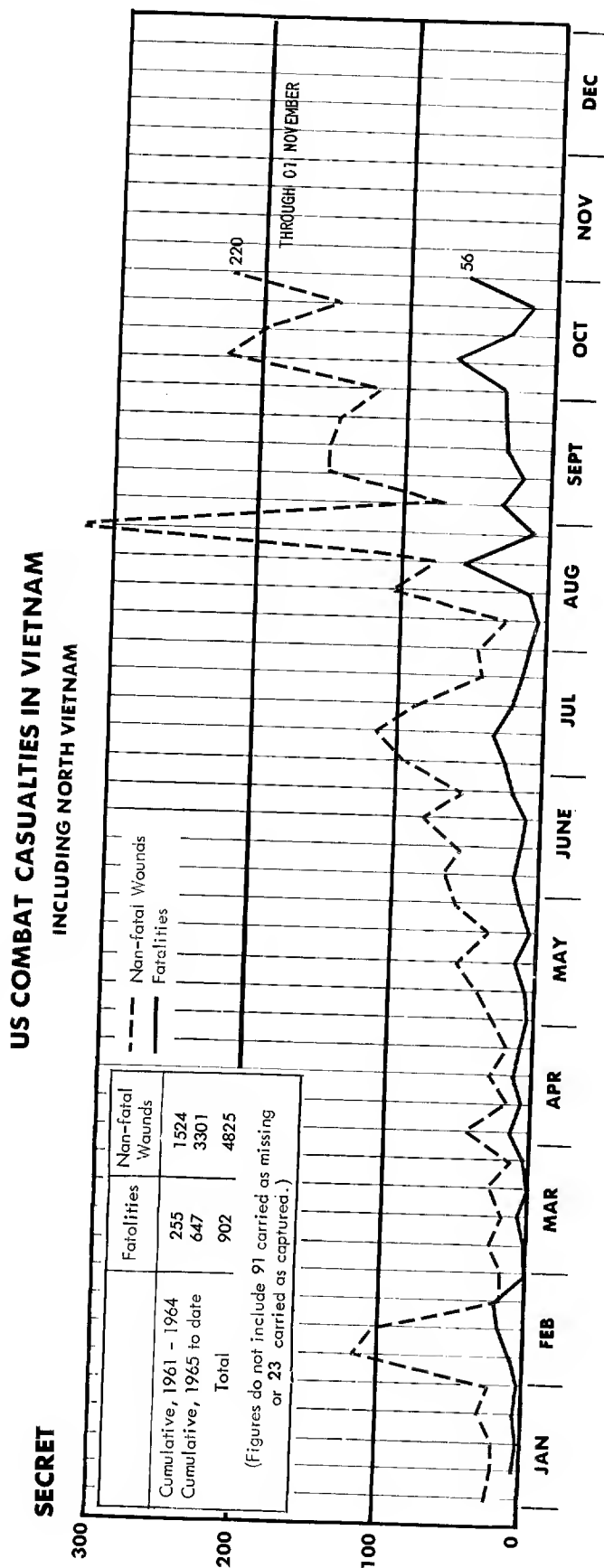
WEAPONS LOSSES



VIET CONG ACTIVITIES



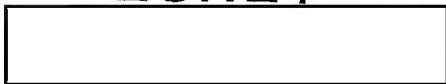
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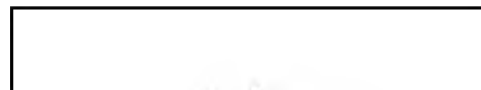
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